



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## DOT working to return air service to Merced

**MERCED – MERCED** - The U.S. Department of Transportation has put the Essential Air Service (EAS) contract for Merced out to bid again in a fast-track process.

The previous carrier, Mesa Air, flying under the name US Airways, stopped air operations at Merced Airport May 31.

The DOT had awarded the air service contract to Great Lakes Airlines Oct. 4, 2007, and the airline was scheduled to begin flights in early 2008. Great Lakes never began service to Merced, citing a number of issues, the chief problem being the soaring price of fuel.

The re-bid period ended on June 13, 2008. After a short period of approximately one week for public comment, DOT is expected to select an airline to provide EAS service.

“We want to provide quality air service to Merced residents, and are working to obtain a new EAS contract quickly,” said Airport Manager Ron Elliott.

In the letter sent to the DOT, the cities of Merced, Visalia, California, and Ely, Nevada asked that Great Lakes be allowed to put in new bids for air service to the communities. People holding tickets to fly from Merced to Las Vegas on US Airways should contact US Airways at 1-800-428-4322 to make other arrangements.